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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASMARA 000162

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SUBJECT: EASTERN FRONT PEACE AGREEMENT: STRUGGLING WITH  
IMPLEMENTATION

Classified By: AMBASSADOR SCOTT H. DELISI, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: In the aftermath of the October 14 signing of the Eastern Front Peace Agreement (EFPA), the undercurrent of tensions, personal ambition and animosities between Eastern Front (EF) leaders came to a head, with a near collapse of the entity in December. The intercession of the Eritrean mediator and pressure from other members of the Eastern Front group appear to have pushed the Eastern Front leadership back into a more-or-less united front in February to proceed, albeit slowly, with working out the details of implementation. Significant ) and possibly show-stopping issues - remain to be resolved, such as who will fill the three cabinet/ministerial-level positions designated for the Eastern Front in the Government of National Unity (GNU). End Summary.

#### PROBLEMS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE AGREEMENT

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¶2. (C) In November, the Eastern Front began to move forward on implementation of the EFPA provisions, beginning first with efforts to build support for the EFPA with the people of Eastern Sudan. Working with the Center for Peacebuilding in the Horn of Africa, the EF distributed copies of the EFPA in Arabic and through other media outlets throughout Eastern Sudan. EF attempts to develop more cohesion as a political party, however, were less successful. Personal rifts between the EF leadership widened over the issue of proposed nominees for the GNU political positions granted to the Easterners under the EFPA.

¶3. (C) One member of the Eastern Front, Dr. Hassan of the Habab clan, related to Poloff that tensions continued to escalate through December between EF Chairman, Mussa Muhammed, and Dr. Amna Dirar. The main point of contention has been the nomination for the newly created position of Advisor to the President. During the EFPA negotiations, Dr. Dirar seemed the likely EF choice to fill this position. Mussa had maintained at the time that he was not interested in the political positions, but rather sought the position of General in the military. However, according to Dr. Hassan, Mussa was later approached by leaders of his own (Beja Hadendowa) tribe and pressed to seek the position of Advisor

to the President and to insist on a bigger portion of the EFPA pie for the Beja Hadendowa claiming that they represent a large percentage of the population. These leaders also urged Mussa to push out Dr. Dirar, a member of the Beni Amer Beja, who they viewed as a threat to their interests. In December, scathing accusations against Dr. Dirar appeared in Arabic press in the region, particularly in Khartoum. (Comment: The implication was that Mussa and the Beja Hadendowa placed these items. End Comment.) Other members of the Eastern Front not directly involved in this power struggle began to express their concern that implementation was not moving forward productively.

¶4. (C) By mid-December, as the dynamics within the Eastern Front became increasingly untenable and with no progress being made on implementation, advisors to the Eastern Front began to speak up. Dr. Taisier Ali of the Center for Peacekeeping in the Horn of Africa raised his concerns with lead Eritrean mediator Yemane Ghebreab. Ghebreab reportedly stepped in and began meeting with EF members to resolve the internal disputes.

#### PICKING UP THE PIECES

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¶5. (C) In a February 15 meeting with Poloff, Dr. Dirar indicated that the Eastern Front seemed to be more-or-less back on track. Dirar said that she had left Eritrea in December to handle a personal family matter. Upon her return to Eritrea in January, she insisted on meeting with Mussa face-to-face. In a series of contentious meetings, she said that she had told Mussa if he continued his false accusations and propaganda campaign, she would fight back and expose what

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he had done. Dr. Dirar relayed to Poloff her suspicions that the National Congress Party (NCP) had encouraged Mussa's machinations. Furthermore she alleged the Wali of the Red Sea, who is paid by the NCP, had tried to bribe younger EF members into speaking out against the EF. (Comment: The intercession by the Eritrean mediator and the direct confrontation between Dirar and Mussa seemed to have yielded some fruit as, according to Dirar, the Eastern Front leadership restarted discussions with the mediator in the last weeks of January about moving forward on EFPA implementation. End Comment.)

#### IMPLEMENTATION IS BEGINNING BUT STILL FACES HURDLES

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¶6. (C) In separate meetings with Dr. Dirar and the Sudanese Deputy Chief of Mission Hussein Mohammed Hussein, both assured Poloff that implementation of the EFPA provisions are now moving forward. The integration of Eastern Front troops may occur as soon as February 25. The camps are ready and General Tekle, the Eritrean General responsible for overseeing the integration, is scheduled to travel to the camps in the Red Sea the week of February 19. While no decision about the integration of officer positions has been made yet, the GNU and the EF both state that they will work toward enrolling 150 Eastern Front soldiers into the police and military officer academies. Hussein also told Poloff that the GNU was ready to proceed with establishing the development fund. He noted that President Bashir had issued the necessary proclamations to secure the funds, however the EF has yet to present its three nominees to participate in the oversight committee. Dr. Dirar confirmed this latter comment, telling Poloff in confidence that she hopes to nominate a financial expert, a regional expert, and a development expert from Eastern Sudan to represent the EF on the board. She added that she had not yet discussed these nominees with EF leaders Mussa and Mabruk Mubarak Salim.

¶7. (C) The main and unresolved point of contention remains the identification of the nominees for the three high-ranking

positions in the GNU ) Advisor to the President, Assistant to the President and a Ministerial position in the Red Sea. According to the agreement, the EF must present President Bashir with three nominees for each post and he will make the final selection. Whereas prior to the EFPA signing, Mussa asserted he wanted to be a General, Dr. Dirar said she wished to serve in the Parliament, and Mabruk claimed he would return to his profitable business enterprises, throughout the winter, all shifted positions in favor of competing for the job of Advisor to the President. According to both the Sudanese DCM and Dr. Dirar, this problem has been resolved and the three leaders have apparently agreed on an arrangement in which each will hold one of the three positions.

18. (C) The Eastern Front also continues its uphill struggle in establishing itself as a viable political entity. Dr. Dirar noted that the EF is working to establish a constitution and develop an organizational structure. She believes that both will be accomplished soon and will facilitate the implementation process and reduce further internal conflicts. Another EF member was less optimistic in his assessment with Poloff. He commented with frustration that implementation was not going well. He noted that recent statements in the media that everything was fine within the EF leadership were not entirely true. Nonetheless, he also expressed hope that the on-going discussions about the structure and operational framework for the EF as a political party will serve to coalesce and strengthen the EF.

Comment

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19. (C) While the signing of the EFPA is seen by many Easterners as a victory in itself, the internal difficulties within the Eastern Front leadership -- differences deeply rooted in historic tribal conflict -- will continue to hamper its ability to effectively implement the agreement

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provisions. Already outgunned by the GNU in terms of political savvy and experience, the tribal cleavages and self-interestedness of the EF leaders will continue to provide the GNU with easily exploitable vulnerabilities. The ability of the EF leadership to amicably resolve the issue of its political representation in the upcoming months will be critical to the EF's continuation as a cohesive political entity. To its credit, the EF leadership appears to have moved past a critical breaking point in December. Post, while not overly optimistic at this point about the durability of either the EF or the permanency of the EFPA is nonetheless encouraged that implementation does, in fact, appear to be moving forward at this time, albeit slowly. We are similarly encouraged that EF members themselves continue to express hope that through the establishment of by-laws, a constitution and clear political platforms the EF has the potential to develop into a stronger political entity, which in turn, they believe will be able to achieve the goals of stabilizing and developing Eastern Sudan. End Comment.

110. (U) Minimize Considered.  
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